

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2275

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: CVIS BTRA UR

SUBJ: VISA PROCEDURES FOR COMMERCIAL VISITORS FROM USSR

REF: A) STATE 178220 NOTAL; B) STATE 193223 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY IS CONCERNED ABOUT SOVIET REACTION TO
DEPARTMENT'S NEW SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITOR VISA PROCEDURES, AND
QUESTIONS FEASIBILITY OF SOME OF THE PROCEDURAL MECHANICS. END
SUMMARY.

2. IF LEGISLATION IS PASSED WHICH WOULD PERMIT EXTENSION
OF MFN TO USSR AND RENEWAL OF EXIM BANK AUTHORIZATION ON TERMS PER-
MITTING US TO COMPETE WITH WESTERN EUROPEANS AND JAPANESE IN
PROVIDING EXPORT FINANCING, EMBASSY FORESEES MINIMUM 25
PERCENT INCREASE IN SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS IN COMING
YEAR. BECAUSE ONE LIKELY RESULT OF EXPANSION OF BILATERAL
TRADE TIES IS INVOLVEMENT OF INCREASING NUMBER OF SMALLER
FIRMS DISPERSED GEOGRAPHICALLY THROUGHOUT AMERICA, SUB-
MISSION OF NEEDED DATA WILL CLEARLY IMPOSE REAL BURDEN

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ON MFA, MFT AND OTHER SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE EMBASSY

UNDERSTANDS AND APPRECIATES REASONS FOR AMENDING VISA PROCEDURES
IN EFFORT TO MONITOR AND CONTROL MORE CLOSELY AND EFFICIENTLY
THE TRAVEL OF SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS TO UNITED STATES,
WE ARE CONCERNED THAT DEPARTMENT'S NEW COMVIS SOV PROCEDURES
(REF A) WILL NOT ONLY APPEAR TO SOVIETS AS STEP BACKWARD
FROM LIBERALIZATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF TRAVEL AND CONTACT

WHICH HAVE SUPPOSEDLY ACCOMPANIED DETENTE, BUT WILL ALSO
GENUINELY OVERLOAD SOVIET CAPACITY TO PROVIDE ACCURATE TRAVEL
INFORMATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY US REQUIREMENTS.

3. EMBASSY INFORMED MFA OF COMVIS SOV REQUIREMENTS BY NOTE
AUGUST 15. MFA CIRCULATED NEW US REQUIREMENTS TO MFT, AS
EVIDENCED BY MFT OFFICIAL'S COMPLAINT TO CONSOFF THAT UNDER NEW
PROCEDURES US IS ASKING FOR MORE INFORMATION THAN SOVIETS ASK
OF US COMMERCIAL VISITORS. MFA HAS NOT YET RESPONDED OR COMMENTED
ABOUT NEW COMVIS PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS, AND PRESUMABLY HAS
THEM UNDER STUDY. EMBASSY PLANS TO MEET WITH MFA IN NEAR FUTURE TO
DISCUSS MATTER, AND WILL ENDEAVOR TO PUT COMVIS PROGRAM IN
POSITIVE LIGHT BY STRESSING HOPE THAT THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
WILL ENABLE US SIDE TO ISSUE COMMERCIAL VISITOR VISAS MORE
EFFICIENTLY AND EXPEDITIOUSLY.

4. RE REF B AND SUBSEQUENT EMBASSY COMVIS CABLES, EMBASSY
SUGGESTS IT AND SOVIET MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD BE
ACCORDED SOME PERIOD IN WHICH TO CONSULT ABOUT, AND ENDEAVOR
TO IMPLEMENT, NEW COMVIS PROCEDURES. IN CUMBERSOME SOVIET
BUREAUCRATIC SYSTEM NOT EVEN MFA DEALS DIRECTLY WITH COMMERCIAL
VISITOR VISA APPLICANTS, BUT DEALS THROUGH MFT AND TRADE
ORGANIZATIONS. SOVIET VISA REQUESTS ARE OFTEN IN BUREAUCRATIC
PIPELINE SEVERAL WEEKS.

5. FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE
RECEIVING SET OF PROCEDURES INVOLVING OTHER US AGENCIES PROMISED
PARA 1 REF A, BUT WHICH HAS NOT YET ARRIVED. ALSO, IN PREPARATION
FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH MFA EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS
ON FOLLOWING:

6. CLOSED AREA RESTRICTION:

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A. EMBASSY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN REASONS FOR RAISING CLOSED AREA
QUESTION IN COMVIS PROCEDURES. IT IS EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING
CLOSED AREAS ARE NOT APPLIED TO SPLEX VISITORS, INCLUDING MOST S
AND T AGREEMENT VISITORS WHO NOW WILL FALL UNDER COMVIS (PARA
2 REF A). EMBOFF WHO WORKED IN SOV COMMERCIAL SECTION MID-1960S
RECALLS THAT SOVIETS WERE NOT OBLIGED REQUEST CLOSED
AREA EXCEPTIONS FOR COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS AT THAT TIME.
MFA HAS NOT BEEN REQUIRED TO MAKE CLOSED AREA

EXCEPTION REQUESTS IN VISA APPLICATIONS AT LEAST
RECENTLY, SO COMVIS PROCEDURE FOR SUCH REQUESTS APPEARS
TO CONSTITUTE NEW REQUIREMENT, AND NEW APPLICATION
OF CLOSED AREA RESTRICTIONS.

B. DEPARTMENT IN PARA 4 REF A SPECIFIED THAT UNDER
NEW COMVIS PROCEDURES MFA IS ASKED TO FORWARD WRITTEN
APPLICATION FOR CLOSED AREA EXCEPTION WITH APPLICATION
VISA FOR TRAVEL TO CLOSED AREA. EMBASSY ASSUMES INCLUSION OF
SENTENCE MAKING SUCH REQUEST IN MFA VISA APPLICATION NOTE
WOULD MEET DEPARTMENT'S REQUIREMENT, AND THAT NO SEPARATE,
SECOND NOTE FROM MFA WOULD BE REQUIRED.

C. EMBASSY ANTICIPATES MFA, MFT AND TRADE ORGANIZATIONS HERE
WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IDENTIFYING WHICH US PLANTS AND
FIRMS ARE IN CLOSED AREAS IN ALL CASES. ONLY GUIDE TO US CLOSED
AREAS WHICH EMBASSY HAS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION TO SOVIETS
HERE IS LIMITED NUMBER OF COPIES OF AUGUST 15, 1967 US CLOSED
AREAS MAP SHOWING CLOSED COUNTIES AND A FEW CITIES. IT WILL BE
CUMBERSOME AND DIFFICULT FOR SOVIETS TO IDENTIFY AND LOCATE ON
MAP THE COUNTY IN WHICH EACH US ESTABLISHMENT IS LOCATED. WHILE
MFA AND SOVIET GOVERNMENT CERTAINLY HAVE CAPABILITY TO DO SUCH
RESEARCH, CAPABILITY DOES NOT IN OUR OPINION EXIST IN PRESENT
STAFFING OF MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION UNIT WHICH PROCESSES AND
PREPARES VISA REQUESTS TO AMEMBASSY.

D. TO MONITOR ACCURACY OF SOVIET IDENTIFICATION OF US CLOSED AREAS
WOULD BE AN ADDITIONAL AND TIME-CONSUMING BURDEN ON AMEMBASSY
CONSULAR SECTION WHICH IS ALREADY UNDER STRAIN COPING WITH PRESENT
WORKLOAD.

E. THUS, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT REQUIREMENT FOR CLOSED AREA EXCEPTION REQUEST BE DELETED FROM VOMVIS PROCEDURES. ALTERNATIVELY,
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PERHAPS COMVIS REQUIREMENT COULD BE MET BY SUGGESTING MFA INCLUDE
SENTENCE REQUESTING EXCEPTION TO "ANY RELEVANT CLOSED AREA
RESTRICTIONS" IN ALL COMMERCIAL VISITOR VISA APPLICATION NOTES,
AND DEPARTMENT COULD CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY, MONITOR AND APPROVE
OR DISSAPPROVE TRAVEL TO CLOSED AREAS. PLEASE ADVISE.

7. RIGIDITY OF ITINERARIES:

A. AS INDICATED REF A PARA 4 AMERICAN HOST COMPANIES AND
EVEN SOVIET COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IN UNITED STATES ARE OFTEN
UNABLE TO FIND OUT SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS' PLANS UNTIL
AFTER VISITORS' ARRIVAL IN UNITED STATES. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER,
SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS OFTEN CANNOT PLAN THEIR FINAL
ITINERARIES PRIOR TO DIRECT CONSULTATIONS WITH HOST FIRMS AND
SOVIET COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IN UNITED STATES AFTER ARRIVAL.

THUS, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE UNWORKABLE TO ATTEMPT TO
INSIST THAT ITINERARIES SUBMITTED HERE MUST ALWAYS BE IN FINAL.

B. SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS OFTEN DEPART LATER THAN SCHEDULED,
AND EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT DEPARTMENT CONTINUE TO AUTHORIZE
VISAS VALID FOR ENTRY WITHIN DEFINED TIME PERIOD OF AT LEAST TWO
OR THREE WEEKS. MONITORING ARRIVALS SHOULD BE SIMPLIFIED BY
FACT THAT ALMOST ALL SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS ARRIVE ON
AEROFLOT.

8. "COMVIS." WE AGREE WITH EE POSTS THAT "COMVIS" IS UNFORTUNATE
CHOICE OF ACRONYM SUGGESTING "COMMUNIST VISA" OR "COMMIE VISA."
WE CONCUR BUSVIS OR ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE PREFERABLE NOTATION ON
VISA.

9. CONSULTATION WITH POSTS: ALTHOUGH WE APPRECIATE THAT DEPARTMENT
KEPT EMBASSY INFORMED ABOUT CONCERN IN WASHINGTON ABOUT SOVIET
COMMERCIAL VISITORS TRAVEL IN UNITED STATES, WE REGRET DEPARTMENT
DID NOT CONSULT POSTS OR INVITE EMBASSY TO COMMENT ABOUT
MECHANICS OF NEW PROCEDURES BEFORE INSTRUCTIONS WERE
ISSUED.
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